

Docket No. F-7139

Scr. No. 09/942,857

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:**

Please replace the claims with the claims provided in the listing below wherein status, amendments, additions and cancellations are indicated.

1. (Previously presented) A method of fabricating a multi-fiber polarization-maintaining fiber assembly, comprising:

(1) a cover removal step for removing covers a few centimeters at one end from a plurality of polarization-maintaining fiber cables with a difference of a few millimeters therebetween to form exposed fiber portions of different lengths from one another;

(2) an assembly step for inserting the polarization-maintaining fiber cables into an insertion hole of a holder tube, holding said polarization-maintaining fiber cables integrally with said exposed fiber portions thereof arranged abreast at a proximal end such that a leading end of a one of the polarization-maintaining fiber cables having a one of the exposed fiber portions which is greater in length than an other of said polarization-maintaining fiber cables extends forward of a corresponding leading end of said other of said polarization-maintaining fiber cables, and sealing the insertion holes of the holder tube with a thermoset resin which is relatively high in viscosity;

Docket No. F-7139

Ser. No. 09/942,857

(3) an adhesive filling step for filling an inner space of a multi-fiber ferrule with a thermoset resin which is relatively low in viscosity;

(4) a fiber cable insertion step for inserting the polarization-maintaining fiber cables assembled integral with the holder tube into the inner space of the multi-fiber ferrule, and inserting exposed fiber portions thereof into corresponding fiber holes of the multi-fiber ferrule;

(5) an orientation adjustment step for, while clamping the multi-fiber ferrule with a clamping jig so as not to be turned, rotating each of the polarization-maintaining fiber cables to determine orientation thereof; and

(6) an adhesive curing step for heating the multi-fiber ferrule while remaining clamped by the clamping jig to cure the thermoset resins.

2-4. (Canceled)

5. (Currently amended) A method of fabricating a multi-fiber polarization-maintaining fiber assembly, comprising the steps of:

removing respective length portions of covers from at least two polarization-maintaining fiber cables, each of said respective length portions being removed from an end of each of the at least two polarization-maintaining fiber cables, said respective length portions differing in length from one another such that exposed fiber portions of the at least two polarization-maintaining fiber cables are

Docket No. F-7139

Ser. No. 09/942,857

formed with different lengths, said respective length portions of said covers being a few centimeters, and said respective length portions differing in length by a few millimeters;

arranging and holding the polarization-maintaining fiber cables with said exposed fiber portions running codirectionally and laterally disposed adjacent one another positioned such that a leading end of a one of said at least two polarization-maintaining fiber cables having a longer of said different lengths than an other of said at least two polarization-maintaining fiber cables extends forward of a corresponding leading end of said other of said at least two polarization-maintaining fiber cables; and

inserting the polarization-maintaining fiber cables into an inner space of a multi-fiber ferrule and the exposed fiber portions thereof into corresponding fiber holes of the multi-fiber ferrule.

6-16. (Canceled)